

Face Coverings in Secondary Schools in Solihull

Following [updated Government guidance](#) issued on 26th August 2020, the council is recommending to secondary schools in the borough **that face coverings should be worn by all secondary school pupils in communal areas of educational settings in Solihull and on school transport.**

Solihull Council acknowledges that whilst the overall risks to children from coronavirus (COVID-19) in relation to education settings is low, the use of face coverings for staff, pupils or other visitors provides additional confidence to families to support a full return of children to school or college. Face coverings have been shown to protect others, rather than the wearer, against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main confirmed sources of transmission of virus that causes coronavirus infection (COVID-19).

This measure is part of a range of protective actions, including frequent cleaning, hand hygiene and reduced mixing of groups of pupils that are in place to reduce the risk from COVID-19 in secondary schools and colleges.

In essence, this means:

- Adults and pupils in year 7 and above **should wear face coverings when moving around buildings, such as in corridors and communal areas** where social distancing is difficult to maintain unless they are [exempt](#).
- Pupils in year 7 and above **should wear face coverings on school-specific buses, minibuses and taxis as part of home-school transport arrangements.**
- This recommendation is for secondary schools only. In primary schools, normally rules apply.
- Considering current evidence, mitigating measures education settings are taking and the negative impact on communication, **face coverings will not be necessary in the classroom** even where social distancing is not possible due to the consistent nature of class groupings. Face coverings can have a negative impact on learning and teaching and so their use in the classroom **should be avoided**.
- Schools/settings should have a supply of disposable face coverings available for pupils to use, should they not have one with them. No-one should be excluded from education on the grounds that they are not wearing a face covering. Schools/settings should also have a supply of zip-lock style bags for pupils to store the masks in when they are not being worn if they don't have one with them.

Pupils and staff members need to ensure that the covering is a tight fit and safely covers their nose and mouth. To prevent inadvertent spread of COVID-19, pupils and staff should ensure that they:

- remove face coverings with care - only touching the straps, ties or clips **rather than the front of the covering**
- store the covering safely in a sealable plastic bag in their school bag during lessons and other times they are not being worn
- avoid touching the face covering whilst they are wearing it
- avoid using a damp covering
- **do not** give it to someone else to use
- dispose of it carefully, if single-use, in a residual waste bin and do not recycle
- wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions if reusable, at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric, changing daily (having one to wash, one to wear and one dry may be best)

- wash hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting them on and once removed.

[Advice on the safe use of face coverings](#) is available and should be sent to parents/carers, uploaded onto school websites and be on display within school buildings. There is a [WHO animated video on the safe use of face coverings](#) and further advice can be found in [national guidance](#).

Reusable and disposable face coverings are widely available to buy and there are instructions in national guidance [on how to make them](#).

As face coverings mainly protect others, not the wearer, from coronavirus (COVID-19) ***they are not a replacement for social distancing, regular hand washing and staying at home if a person or anyone in their household has symptoms of COVID-19.*** These measures are ***as important as ever*** in preventing the spread of the virus.